

## Why MMP is a fair voting system

New Zealanders vote to have a say in the future of the country. We each vote for the parties and politicians we think will make the best decisions. In a fair voting system, each person's vote counts equally.

### What makes a voting system fair?

When a voting system is fair, it is:

- proportional: each person's vote counts as much as anyone else's, and
- representative: Parliament reflects who we are and makes decisions on our behalf.

### Proportional systems are fair

In proportional systems, the total number of votes for a party decides how many MPs that party has in Parliament. If a quarter of all voters choose a party, that party gets a quarter of the seats. In non-proportional systems, such as First Past the Post (FPP) and Supplementary Member (SM), a party can get fewer votes than its competitor and still win the election. This is because votes are wasted. Under FPP and SM, votes for all of the losing candidates get no representation.

Any extra votes for a candidate who has already won are wasted, too. Most electorates are "safe seats", where one candidate wins by a comfortable margin. Under FPP and SM systems people living in a safe seat almost may as well not vote as their vote will have so little effect. A person voting in one of the small number of "marginal seats" has much, much more influence on the election result than anyone in a safe seat.

For example, in the 1990 election under FPP, 48% of votes went to losing candidates. On top of that, 20% of votes were for winning candidates who didn't need those extra votes to win.

Because under FPP and SM a candidate must win an electorate to get into Parliament, smaller parties found it hard to gain seats, even if they had a lot of support across the country. Thus a smaller party might win 10% or even 20% of the votes nationally and get, if any, only a handful of seats in Parliament. That wasn't fair.

All these wasted votes, and the fact that some people's votes counted for so much more than other people's, was a large part of why New Zealanders voted to introduce MMP.

Proportional voting systems encourage people to vote, because they know their vote counts.

## **Representative parliaments are fair**

Under FPP, each candidate has to compete to win their local electorate. To improve the odds, political parties usually choose traditionally safe candidates – usually lots of men in suits. It is hard for women and people from minorities to even be chosen by a party to run for Parliament.

In contrast, under MMP we have a parliament that better mirrors New Zealand's diversity. For example, in 1993, before the introduction of MMP, only 21% of MPs were women. Now women make up 34% of MPs.

Representative voting systems give us governments that are better able to understand our diversity and represent our concerns and aspirations.

## **What about list MPs? Who do they represent?**

All of us belong to different communities based on:

- where we live
- our politics and interests
- our stage of life – whether we're students, working or retired, for example
- our gender, ethnicity, race and religious beliefs, and
- many other factors.

Under MMP, we use our electorate vote to choose an MP who will represent where we live. Then we use our party vote to support the party that will best stand up for our other interests.

Under MMP, even if your local candidate doesn't win, you're still represented in Parliament by the party you voted for.

Electorate MPs have a duty to represent people in a particular geographical area, no matter who they are. List MPs are better able to represent other types of communities, whose members may be spread throughout the country.

## **How is MMP fair?**

MMP is proportional and representative. It is proportional, because the total number of votes for a party decides how many MPs that party has in Parliament. And it is representative because it creates governments that reflect the society we live in.

MMP is fair. It's working well for New Zealand. So let's keep MMP.